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ABSTRACT

Part of the "Teaching Young People to be Critical Series," this book defines and analyzes ethics and ethical terms for children in grade six and older. Intended for individual or group work, the objectives are threefold: reading improvement, reading enjoyment, and student involvement in making the leap from abstractions to practicalities in dealing with some of life's more common enigmas. The use of inquiry and thought is emphasized. Included are questions to think about, exercises to do that clarify words or ideas, discussion topics, and problem-solving exercises. Ethics is defined in the first part, offering pointers in understanding as well as numerous examples of the ways ethical words are used. The middle part lists forbidden or hurtful value terms, and the reasons why they should be avoided. The book explains that an ethical term may mean many different things, according to the context in which it is used. Understanding the ways in which ethical words can be misused helps the child to feel better about himself and the situation. The final parts summarize by emphasizing that ethics is scientific, based upon intelligence and inquiry, and offer suggestions on how to solve ethical questions. Some ethical problems are posed for discussion, suggesting that the student use the scientific problem-solving methods of clarifying terms and desires, and finding methods of achieving those desires. The result is a gain in knowledge of the cause-effect relationship and possible consequences of an action. The last part contains jokes about ethical or value terms. (CK)

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ETHICS

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS FOR CHILDREN

by
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Time: A Critical Analysis for Children, 1978
Others forthcoming.

BOOKS FOR PROFESSIONALS AND ADULTS

Rational Love, 1978
Humor: A Comprehensive Classification and Analysis, 1978
Wittgenstein, Language and Philosophy, 1970
Death: An Interdisciplinary Analysis, 1974
Emotion, 1974
Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History, 1971
Essays on Metaphor, 1972
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Philosophical Pictures, 1971

OTHER PUBLISHERS

Models of Ancient Greek Philosophy (Vision, England) 1971
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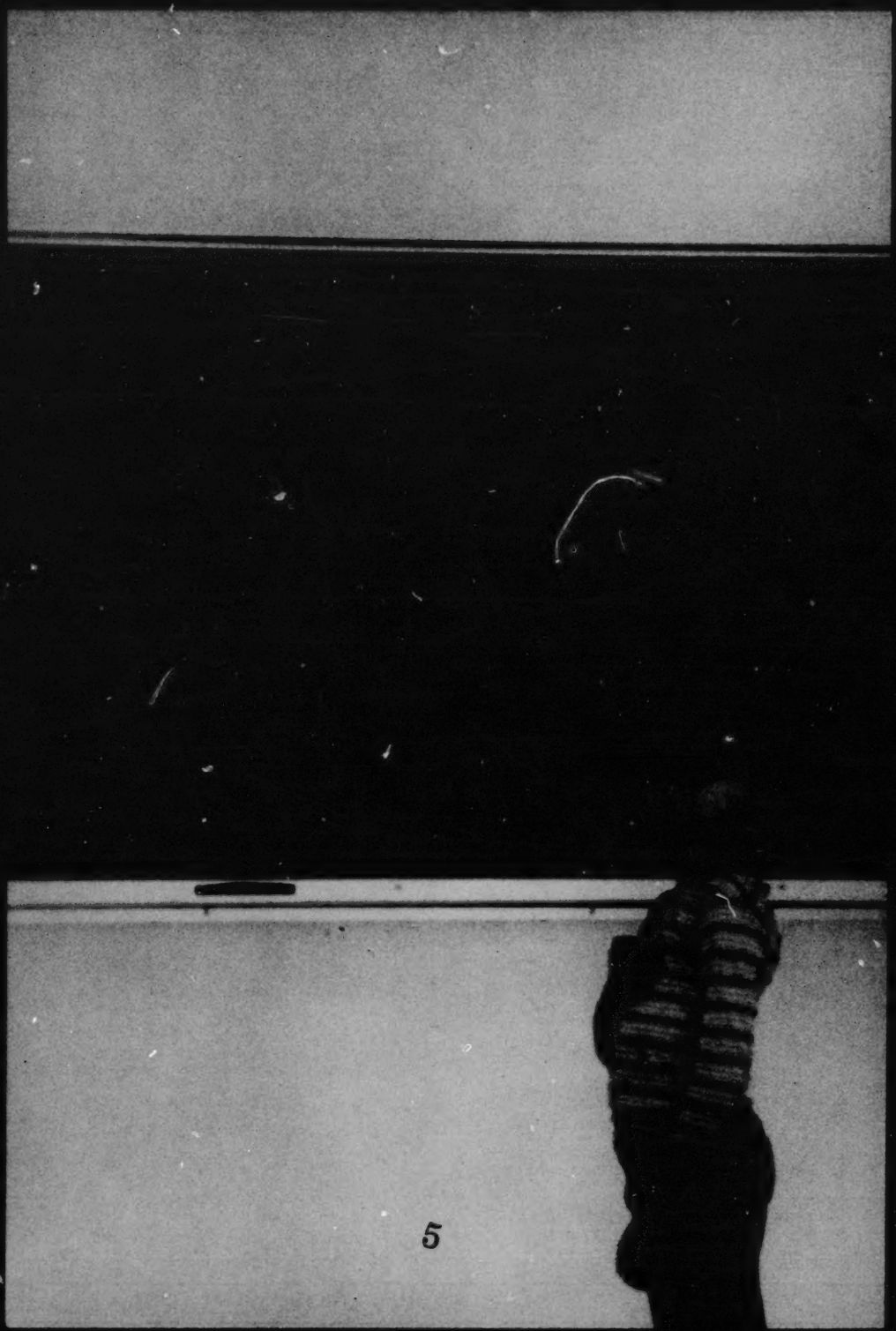
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The philosopher, Wittgenstein, wrote,"The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language."

And the philosopher, John Dewey, wrote, "To be playful and serious at the same time is possible and defines the ideal mental condition."

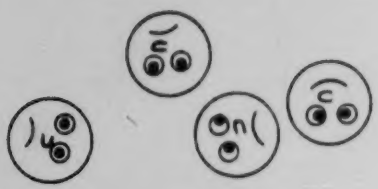
ETHICS FOR CHILDREN

After putting butter in his watch to try to make it work, the March Hare said, "It was the *best* butter, you know." (The reader may wish to begin by reading the other jokes at the end of the book.)

INTRODUCTION

The Queen in *Alice in Wonderland* can seem to think of nothing more to say about good, bad and justice than, "Off with people's heads." She even orders the heads to be cut off of "face" cards. But it is not clear how a head can be cut off of something that does not have a head. We can let her struggle with that question.

Here we will examine what ethical terms, such as "good," "best" (see *best* butter above), and "bad" mean. We will examine how they are misused. There are also ethical commands, such as, "Don't enter," or "Off with their heads." The command, "Off with their heads!" is not nice. And "nice," too, is an ethical term.



The first rule of ethics is: Off with their heads!

Most people do not like to be questioned. They just like to think they are <u>right</u>. But what is ethics all about? What is an ethical term?

A woman said to me, "You know I have often had thoughts such as: 'How do I know I have a mind?' 'What is an idea really like?' 'What do frogs think?' 'What are the best things for me to do?' 'How do we make decisions?' " She said she once thought that she was the only one in the world who had ideas of that sort. But she later found that other people had such questions too. Such thinking is a part of all of us. Perhaps all of us in some ways, and at some time, ask very critical questions about things around us.

We use ethical terms much of the time. We make ethical judgments. But we very seldom, if ever, ask what these ethical terms mean. What do we mean by "good"? Is saying that something is "good" like saying something is "green"? Our inquiry into ethics begins, then, with wonder and curiosity about things. We say things without knowing how or why we say them. This book is an attempt to change all that.

There is an experience here which can change your life. Have you ever had a belief and later found that it was wrong? Once you correct a belief you can no longer go back to think in the mistaken way you once thought. You became a different person. Learning about ethical terms is like that also. Once you gain an understanding about how ethical terms are used and misused,

People often seem to misuse ethical language without knowing it.

With muscle power I'm almost as strong as a wrench.

you will never think about ethics in the way you did before. You will have gained a powerful new tool with which to think and solve problems. Let's take a look at some of that power.

This book does not tell you *what* to do, or give you a moral of some sort. Rather it tells how *you* can figure out and decide what to do and what not to do. The problem is often not whether or not you agree with someone about what is right or good, but what you really mean by these terms. Once that is clear there may be no disagreement left.

Learning about ethics gives you power.

The power of learning and inquiry is greater than muscle power, gunpower, magic, group power, or even beauty power. On television, the heroes are often cowboys, or detectives who can shoot fast and straight. But these heroes could easily be shot by a long-range rifle, or outwitted by an intelligent person.

Some animals have a lot of muscle power, but not as much intelligence power as humans have. It is surprising that so many people think of muscular people as heroes. The real heroes are not the elephants, but those who know how to think clearly, fairly and well.

Beauty power.

Magic is a trick. Mystical beliefs are irrational. Magical power is the power of deceiving, or the power of pretending to be what you are not. It is not genuine knowledge or understanding. Mysticism, or belief in such things as ghosts, is mere imaginary thinking. The mystical is what we are ignorant of, or would just hope might be true. Many people mystically think of rock singers as heroes or gods, and even worship them. Magic and mysticism are false powers.

Group power is dangerous. We often do unintelligent things, such as bicycle too fast, drink alcohol, or follow fads just so that we can be accepted into a group. We often do strange and harmful things in a group which we would not do alone. Muscle groups or teenage gangs are often for people too weak to be individuals, or too weak to think for themselves. This is not real power either.

Beauty power. Men, as well as women, often spend a lot of money for clothes and cosmetics so they will look good and have the power of attraction. Their heroes might be handsome movie stars. Beauty is nice. But it is not intelligence. It does not help us understand how to solve problems, or how to be kind or fair to others. Being overconcerned with our appearance or clothes is trying to be what we are not. It is a false power.

The power of reason is perhaps the greatest power man can have.

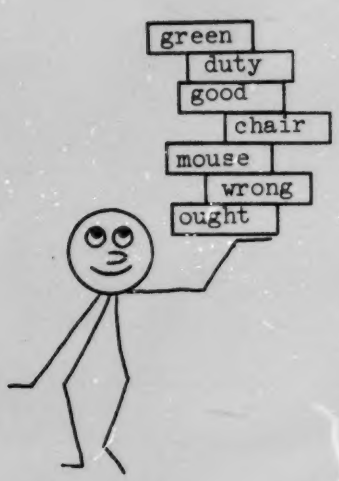
The way to be really strong or powerful is not by beauty, guns, magic, muscle or traveling in groups. It is by inquiring honestly, openly, and inteligently in order to understand ourselves, others and things around us. It is, in short, to learn how to ask questions and to discuss issues. It is to learn how our language works. You can be more powerful than others if you inquire and learn to think clearly. This is the power of reason. But also at the same time one can be more happy, kind and fair. With other powers you have power mainly by hurting or deceiving others or yourself. To have knowledge is to have the most and fairest power. Now we can be our own heroes.

One of the most important things to inquire into and know about is how words such as "good" and "bad" work. These are ethical terms. They are often misused, or not understood very well. To understand how such words are used correctly, gives you a great deal more power than you now have and also may change your life in a great many ways.

Mysticism seems to mean
that which we don't know.
So it doesn't make sense
to believe in it. A bird
once told me that.

Exercise

a) Discuss the importance of inquiry and knowledge.
b) Discuss your heroes and tell whether it is intelligent to to regard them as heroes. It is certainly enjoyable.
c) Discuss the heroes presented on television, in movies, novels and funny-books.
d) Discuss how important cosmetics and beautiful clothes are for various people.
e) Discuss whether it makes sense to believe in magic and mysticism. Is magic based on tricks? Do both mystical beliefs and blind prejudices lack evidence?



To become clear about ethics, first see which words are ethical words, then find out what they mean.

Understanding Ethics: How to be more fair, more intelligent and more powerful at the same time.

Ethics is about statements you hear many times every day. They are statements, such as the following: (The ethical term is in different type (italics). How many of these things have you been told?

1) It is *bad* to be selfish.
It is *bad* to lie or steal.
It is *bad* to be dishonest.
It is *bad* not to listen to others.
It is *bad* to get angry.
It is *bad* to avoid work.
It is *bad* to talk back.
It is *bad* to call people names.
It is *bad* to avoid homework.
It is *bad* to hit people.
It is *bad* to yell.
It is *bad* to tease people too much.
It is *bad* to sulk.
It is *bad* to be careless.
It is *bad* to make work for others.
It is *bad* not to talk about what bothers you.
It is *bad* to make fun of others.
It is *bad* to interrupt too much.
It is *bad* to throw stones at others.

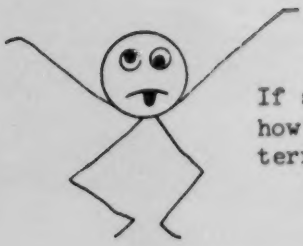
The words "ethical,"
"moral," and "value,"
themselves may mean "good."
To say something is moral
is to say it is good or right.

But often children do odd or funny things, and then ethical statements are made such as:

It is *bad* to skate on the kitchen table.
It is *bad* to spray soda on the cat.
It is *bad* to eat cat food.
It is *bad* to put a frog in your parents' bed.
It is *bad* to eat worms.
It is *bad* to eat toothpaste.
It is *bad* to put the cat's tail in a soda bottle.

Now, check this. How many of the following statements have people made to you?

2) It is *good* to say what you think and feel.
It is *good* to be kind to people.
It is *good* not to get angry.
It is *good* to try to put yourself in the other person's shoes (but don't keep the shoes).
It is *good* to be patient.
It is *good* not to be lazy (I'm not sure about this one).
It is *good* to learn as much as you can.
It is *good* to have intelligent goals.
It is *good* to learn how to love others.
"Good" is not always an ethical word. An example is "Goodbye.")



If spinach is so <u>good</u> how come it tastes so terrible?

But we can also say:

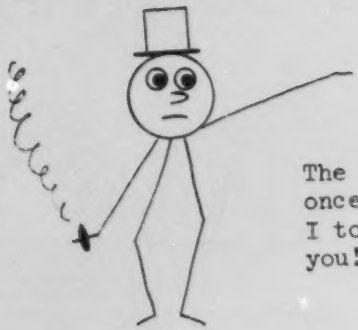
It is *good* to be lazy.
It is *good* to be angry.
It is *good* to hate people.

The following show the other main kinds of ethical terms:

3) It is *right* to obey the law.
4) It is *wrong* to cheat.
5) You *ought* to, or *should*, be kind to people.
6) You *ought not* to, or *shouldn't*, smoke.
7) He is *better* in school than I am. (Compare *best* butter.) "Better" also refers to preferences and grading things.
8) He is the *worst* student in school.
9) "Do whatever I say!" Commands or orders are often ethical statements. Remember the Queen's statement, "Off with their heads!" or "Do as I say, but not as I do."

These statements are the main kinds of ethical statements. Ethical statements, then, contain or imply these words:

good	bad
right	wrong
ought (duty)	ought not



The comedian, W.C. Fields, once said, "Never mind what I told you - do as I tell you!"

should should not
better worse
commands, or orders

Exercise

Give several examples of each of these types of ethical statements.

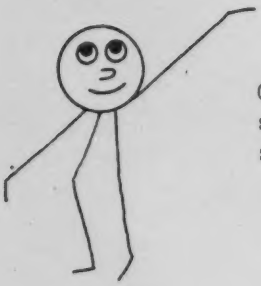
Most, or all, ethical words or actions reduce to those given above. Although there are thousands of ethical words or actions they all, basically, just mean good, bad, right, wrong, better, worse, ought, ought not, or a command.

Now we know what ethical terms are and how to tell whether or not a statement is an ethical one. But there are some other ways to make ethical statements, and all of them are just other ways of making the nine statements above. They are:

1. By having an irritated or angry tone of voice one shows that something is *wrong* or *bad, ought not* to be done, or is *worse than* something else.

2. By having a warm, accepting tone of voice. This may be to say that something is *right* or *good, ought to* be done, or is *better than* something else.

3. By a gesture, such as stamping one's foot; by moving one's hand, as if throwing something away, or, as if stopping something. This may be



Oscar Wilde said, "I have the simplest tastes. I am always satisfied with the best."

to say that something is *wrong, bad, ought not* to be done, or is *worse than* something else.

4. By a gesture, such as clapping. This can mean that something is *good, right, ought to* be done, or is *better than* something else.

5. By making a pleasant (*good*) or unpleasant (*bad*) face. (Do people even stick out their tongues at each other?)

6. By certain statements, such as the following (all refer to *bad* or *wrong*):

a) "What do you think you are doing, anyway?"
b) "Oh, no!"
c) "How many times have I told you not to do that?"
d) "Now what are you up to?"
e) "Well!"
f) "Well, I've seen everything, but this takes the cake!"

Exercise

Act out several ways of making ethical statements.

Other ethical words are just ways of saying the nine types mentioned earlier. Examples:

Blame = what you did is *bad* or *wrong.*
Praise = what you did is *right* or *good.*
Guilt = feeling *bad* because of a *wrong* you did.

Mark Twain said, "You ought never to do wrong when people are looking.

Duty = what you *should* or *ought* to do.
Obligation = what you *should* or *ought* to do.
Responsibility = what you *should* or *ought* to do.
Inferior = *worse than.*
Superior = *better than.*
Fair = *right* and/or *good.*
Nice = *good.*
Vulgar = *bad, wrong,* something which *should not* be done, or something *worse than* something else.

Almost any word can be a value word if we do not like it. Strong cheese may suggest something "bad." It is not just words, but contexts which can make situations ethical ones.

Exercise

Give some other words like these which contain ethical terms. You may wish to look in a book or dictionary for such words. For example, see if the following words are, to some extent, value terms: innocent, obey rules, fine, OK, choice (better than), mature, immature, criticism, irresponsible, absurd, blame, worth, deserve, lowly, inferior, superior, beneficial, vulgar, vile, outrageous, debase, disrespectful, repulsive, nice, important, excuse, immoral, ethical, moral, valuable, supreme, pure, coarse, obscene, advice, justify, praise, con, preference, proper, appropriate, approve.

Forbidden Value Terms (Ridicule terms)

We can take nearly any term and make it into a *naughty* term. Instead of "He *talks*," we can say, "He blabs." "Talks" is objective and descriptive. It does not suggest good or bad. But "blabs" is different. "Blabs" means, "He talks *too much* and that is *bad*." Thus, "blabs" is an ethical or value term. It is a value carrying term.

One thing about such words is that they are unkind or somewhat insulting. Thus, they are not acceptable words to use. They are impolite. They are forbidden.

These words can hurt a lot. You may not feel wonderful if someone calls you a "jerk," or a "creep."

On the other hand, people do sometimes use these words for fun. They call someone a "green weed" not to hurt them, but to tease them. If you call a good friend a "twerp," and he knows you are joking, there may be no harm done. But such words are "risk" words, or "chance" words. The risk is that the other person may think you are serious. It may make him or her feel very bad. Or, it may be risky because it may result in a fight. Is calling someone a "twerp," worth a bloody nose or broken arm? They are bloody words.

For example, instead of "overweight," we say

"fat." "Fat" means "the person is overweight and that is bad, so we can laugh at him or her." Of course, it is cruel to laugh at people. "Fat" suggests that someone eats too much, and so we laugh at this mistake. "Fat" is an unacceptable term because ridicule is unkind and hurts people. It means "You are fat and that is bad," and "You are fat and I don't accept you." But, remember, many people are overweight because of medical problems, not because they eat too much. They cannot help being overweight, so we *should not blame* them.

Here are some other examples of forbidden value terms, or terms to avoid. They are fun and funny terms, but they can also be very hurtful to people.

(objective words)	*(forbidden value words)*
Instead of saying:	We say:
thin	skinny
keeps	hogs
spill	slosh
moved	jerked
pulled	yanked
quiet	dead
move quietly	sneak
talk	jabber
be inactive	mope

make music	make noise
group	gang
policemen	cops
boy	kid
woman	chick
cat	kitty (*cute* or *good* cat)
take	grab
misbehave	naughty
very bad	terrible
very bad	awful
deep throat sound	grunt
sound	noise
put it in	stuff it in
put	cram
put it in	jam it in
concert music	tunes
dirt	filth
throw	toss
knock on the door	bang the door
the plants	the weeds
to cut	to butcher
eat meat	eat burned flesh
bite	crunch
sip	slurp
one who teases	twit
eat	gobble
wait	stick it out
swallow	gulp

poor or inferior	lousy
bad person	rat, skunk
short person	runt
nonsense	ridiculous
obstinate	pig-headed
mistaken person	fool
idle talk	twaddle
not neat	sloppy

The words in the right column, then, are unacceptable value words. They ridicule.

Exercise

a) Think of some other examples of forbidden value terms.

b) When do you think it is right to use these terms? When is it not right?

Humor Contains Value

Humor also includes value or ethical terms. Suppose you eat spaghetti and blueberries for breakfast. This is unusual for most people, and we may laugh at the unusual. That is, if we think, "Eating spaghetti and blueberries is odd, but OK, and *not* harmful or *bad*," then we may laugh. If we think that eating it is odd, or weird, and is bad, then we do not laugh. We take the odd behavior too *seriously* (as bad or harmful). Thus, humor contains an ethical or value judgment. We must accept a situation as *good* or *not bad*, in order to laugh at it. If someone slips on a banana we may laugh. If he breaks his leg when he falls, we do not usually laugh.

What do ethical terms say? How do they work?

It is a great surprise for many people to learn that ethical terms, in themselves, say little or nothing. What does it really mean if you say, "I am bad"? Do we know something new about you? If so, what? Ethical terms are funny things.

But if you say, "I am tall," we do know something new about you. "Tall" refers to a very definite thing. "Bad" is a vague word. What it means is not very definite. "I am bad," is not like "I am tall," or "I am thin." If all you are told is that you are *bad*, you are not told much of anything. *Bad*, or any ethical word, can mean very many different things. To find out what it means we must ask the person who uses the word. It is like Alice, who said in *Through The Looking-Glass*, "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are!"

In fact, "bad" can mean two entirely different things. For example, if two people say, "The war is bad," one may mean that we should have killed more people and won it. The other may mean that we should not have killed anyone, and should not even have been in the war.

"Bad" then, or any ethical term, may mean a great many different things. "Bad behavior," for

Shakespeare showed how vague ethical words can be. He wrote, "If that be right which Warwick says is right, there is no wrong, but everything is right." (Henry VI)

example, means one or more of the following about one's behavior:

1. It is against the law.
2. It is against certain rules.
3. Most people don't do it.
4. It is not what our friends do.
5. It is a strange thing to do.
6. We have been told not to do it.
7. It is *wrong*. (This is just *another* ethical term.)
8. We *ought not* to do it. (Another ethical term.)
9. It is against one's religion.
10. It causes harm.
11. I don't like it.

(Other meanings.)

This shows that the word "bad" alone says little in itself. It has no special mystical meaning in itself. We have to know what is meant by it. We have to know the context in which it is used. We must substitute one of the many possible meanings given above in order to know what is meant by "bad". This applies to all ethical terms.

Summary: *Ethical terms:*

a) mean many different things.

b) mean nothing in themselves.

Mark Twain wrote, "Man
is the only animal that blushes.
Or needs to."

Exercise

Read or think of some ethical statements of each type (good, bad, right, wrong, ought, ought not) and tell what is meant by the ethical terms in them.

It is important to be able to discuss and describe things objectively (or impartially). Practice discussing a topic which people often disagree about without using value terms, without raising your voice or becoming upset. Try to just present the facts, the causes and effects of your, or the other person's, beliefs. You will find that it is difficult to do. It is to discuss objectively rather than to be argumentative. To say "It is raining," is an objective fact. To say "It is terrible that it is raining," is a value judgment added to a fact. The philosopher Marcus Aurelius said:

"A cucumber is bitter—throw it away. —There are briars in the road—turn aside from them. This is enough. Do not add, 'And why were such things made in the world?'"

People often use strong value terms to try to persuade others or force them to agree.

What's good for
lunch - hamburger?

Wrong, leftovers
are good.

Misuses of ethical words.

We saw that ethical words are vague or empty words. Because of this, there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding when they are used. For example, you may be told that you are bad, yet never know what is meant by it, or why you are said to be bad. People often trick themselves, as well as others, by misusing ethical words. Here are a number of misuses:

1. *Ethical words are vague and can trick us.*

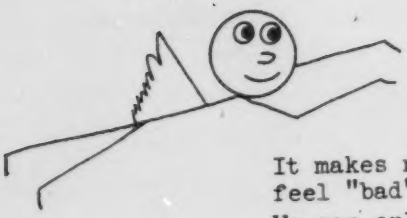
A student says, "If you vote for me for class president, then I will do *good* things for you."

This can be a trick because he has not said what he will do for you, or what the "good" thing is. It may be that he thinks that it is a good thing if everyone does whatever he tells them to do. Thus, it is always necessary to ask, "What do you mean by 'good'?" (or any other ethical term.)

"Be not simply good; be good for something."
—Thoreau

Exercise

Create some jokes, for example, by claiming to give someone something good, and then give them something strange, for example, an old carrot. Ask someone what kinds of things he likes and then say, "Wrong." Discuss this reply.



It makes no sense to
feel "bad" or "inferior."
We can only do what is within
our ability. Because cats
cannot fly does not make
them inferior to birds.

2. *Understanding the word "bad" helps prevent inferiority.*

Someone may say to you, "You are *bad.*" This may not make you as happy as when you received your first toy or bicycle. And it may make you feel as if you just stepped in some mud. But what does "bad" mean here? Until you find out in clear detail, there is no reason to worry about it, or to feel inferior. *"Bad" has no meaning in itself.* No one is "bad" in itself. It makes no sense to say, "You are just bad, that's all."

What is meant by "you"? "You" means all the things you do and say, and the way you look. But no one can object to all of your actions, qualities, and so on. Not all can be "bad." So, it is incorrect to say, "*You* are bad." It is more careful to say, "Some of the things you do are bad." You may, for example, just yell a bit too much. If so, don't feel bad, but do try to stop yelling. Feeling bad won't improve you.

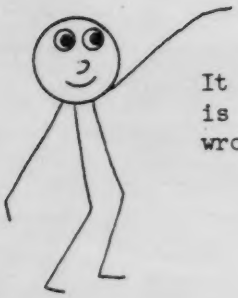
Suppose what is meant by "bad" is stated, for example, "You're bad because you are not careful when you ride your bicycle, and that may cause someone to get hurt." It is not *you* who are bad, but the *way* you ride your bicycle. You *ride* badly. You can stop riding, or try to improve your bike riding. But, in no case need you feel inferior.

There are probably even people who feel bad because they are always happy.

Just accept what you can and can't do, and try to improve. No one is ever just a "bad" person, or even just a "good" person. Again, if someone says you are bad, ask kindly how, and why, and what is meant by "bad." If you agree with them, then do only what you are able to do to change.

There are many ways of making people feel bad besides telling them they are bad. People sometimes avoid others, do not give them attention, do not listen to them, and try to find fault with them. These things can make one feel bad or inferior. But *one cannot expect to be liked by everyone*, and even if no one likes him he need not feel inferior or bad. Often, very intelligent people are not liked, because people are jealous of them, or merely because they have different interests. Being liked by others is nice, but it is not always a good test of whether or not a person should or should not feel inferior. Also, there are ways to become well-liked if one wishes to do so.

It is a mistake, then, to say, "You are bad." Do not feel inferior, or that you are a bad person. *You can only do what is within your power, what you are able to do.* And that is nothing to feel "bad" about. In addition, by reading this, you are improving your knowledge and power. If you are confused about the word "bad" you might make the mistake of feeling "bad." Here is where



It looks a lot like there
is something wrong with
wrong.

learning about ethical terms helps one to better understand how emotions and feelings work.

Exercise

Discuss any feelings of inferiority you have and show why there is really no need to have them.

3. *People often don't even know why they say something or someone is right or wrong.* When asked for the reason, they say things such as, "It's wrong, that's all," "It is wrong in itself," or "It is obvious that it is wrong." This is a misuse because to say only that something is wrong, is not a reason, and says nothing until some specific meaning is given. Is it wrong in every possible sense? If not, it cannot be wrong in itself. To be wrong in itself means to be wrong for no reason at all. This is blind prejudice. Nothing is, in itself, right or wrong, good or bad. Shakespeare once wrote, *"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."* There is no one single thing which is always regarded as good by everyone. If there were no people in the world, nothing would be good or bad. They are our human terms. Marcus Aurelius wrote,

"If you are pained by an external thing it is not this thing that disturbs you—but your judgment about it." We need to know what is meant by

I always tell my cat to do things. It never does! Sometimes I think it doesn't understand why it should obey me.

good or bad and what the reasons are. Otherwise people may, without knowing it, do things which are harmful to others or to themselves.

Once you understand this and find reasons for your actions, you may find that some things which you thought to be right are actually harmful, and some things you thought to be wrong, are really helpful. It is important to constantly criticize ethical beliefs or statements.

In *Alice in Wonderland* the Dormouse misuses "right" when he says, "You've no right to grow here." But we do not have control of our growing and so cannot be blamed for it.

Exercise

a) See if you can think of something that is always wrong, or wrong in itself. (For example, is killing humans always wrong? Is stealing always wrong? Is lying always wrong?)

b) Does anyone have a right in itself to be or do anything?

4. *It can be a mistake to follow commands or duties without knowing why.* It is not enough for someone to say, "You *ought* to do it," or "It is your *duty* to do it." You should, for clarification or understanding, find out why it is your duty and why you ought to do it. It can be harmful to obey blindly.

Stop! Stop what you are doing!
Obey me! First draw my picture.
Then run around the room twice and
touch your nose with your toe.
Then come back and read two words.
Then smell the page number.
Then ask yourself what you did all
those silly things for.

Often, students say to other students, "You ought to study less." But why? To have more fun? But if one studies less he may find it harder to earn money later, and so in the long run, have less fun. Intelligent judgment is needed.

To say, "You ought to do a certain thing," may mean, "You may like to do it," or "If you don't do it, something harmful will happen." But you may not mind if it happens. Brer Fox said to Brer Rabbit, "If you don't behave, I'll throw you in the briar patch." But the rabbit grew up in a briar patch, and he loved it, so he got his enemy, Brer Fox, to throw him into it, thereby allowing Brer Rabbit to escape.

Therefore, it is not enough to be told that you ought to do something, or that it is your duty. Find out why you should do it and see whether the results will be harmful or helpful to others, as well as to yourself.

It is not an acceptable excuse to say, "I did it because I was told to do it." You have to accept the consequences for what you do.

"Voices went on, saying 'She [Alice] must go by post, as she's got a head on her—' 'She must be sent as a message by the telegraph—' 'She must draw the train herself the rest of the way—'" Alice then replies, "Indeed, I shan't."

Alice knew enough to question what other people told her she should do. Also "ought"

When someone says you ought to do something, or have a duty, or responsibility, always find out why you should do it.

refers to some goal or purpose. We "ought" to do something in order to obtain a goal. Now watch Alice make a mistake about this in the following:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where—" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

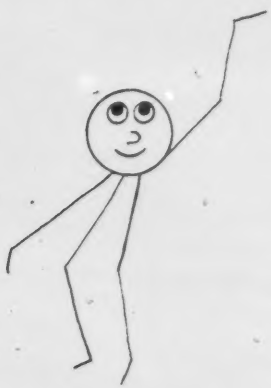
"—so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

Often, people, for selfish reasons, tell others to do something. Someone may say to you, "Do my homework!" or "You *should* do my homework." They may mean, "Do my homework so I won't have to do it," or "If you don't do my homework for me, then I won't like you." These may not be acceptable reasons. Why should you need to be liked by someone who takes advantage of you? Why should you do someone else's homework for him? It will not help him to learn. You need not let people make you think you have duties, without kindly asking them to first give you reasons for them.

The algebra of ethics:

"It's wrong because it's immoral,"
is a circular statement, not a reason
or argument. It is circular to define
one ethical term by another.
Wrong=immoral.



Exercise

Discuss the duties you have or might have. Tell why you have them and whether you and others are helped or harmed by them. (Do you think a wife has a duty to do *whatever* her husband tells her to do? Do you think an employee has a duty to do *whatever* his boss tells him to do? Must a soldier *always* obey his superior?)

5. *Circular statements can trick us.*

"Boys are boys," is circular. So also is, "It is a round circle." There are no square circles. Circular statements don't give us new knowledge, they just repeat what is already said or asked.

Many ethical statements are circular. For example, one student said, "The reason you *ought* to do it is because it is your *duty*." But "duty" means, "You ought to do it." The statement *seems* to say something or give a reason, but it doesn't.

This mistake could cost you your life. If, for example, you think you *ought* to fight in every battle which comes along because it is your *duty*, you may live a very short life. Again, we should question what people tell us to do in order that we may understand what is being said, and what consequences follow.

You need never feel criticized or bad. Treat criticisms only as true or false statements.

Hsueh-T'ou wrote, "When one has understanding one should laugh; One should not weep."

6. *How never to feel blamed or criticized.*

It was mentioned earlier that we need never feel "bad" or inferior. But "blame" and "criticism" are other words which mean "bad" also. So we need not feel blamed or criticized, any more than we need feel bad.

To criticize you or blame you, is to say that your behavior is bad. To say it is bad is to say nothing yet, because ethical terms are vague or open-context terms.

Someone tells you that you burned the toast. Why should you feel criticized, or that you did something bad? Why not rather say, "Yes, I did that and I will try not to burn toast again." *You need not feel blamed or bad, but can just try to correct your behavior.* Do not say, "I burned the toast, so I am a *bad person*," or "I burned the toast, and that's *terrible*." Just deal with the objective fact. It is a fact that the toast is burned. It is not a fact that that is terrible.

Next time you are blamed or criticized, do not become upset. Rather, see if what is being said is true or false. If it is true and harmful, admit it and try to change. If it is false, or not harmful, explain calmly why you think so.

This is another instance where knowing how ethical terms work helps us better understand emotions.

If you do something which hurts others, don't worry about it, or feel guilty. Just do what you can to make up for it and learn how to prevent it from happening again.

Exercise

Discuss instances of blame and criticism in your experience. Last time you were criticized or blamed did you become upset or did you listen to see if the criticism or blame made sense? Did you admit it if you make a mistake? Do you raise your voice or try too strongly to defend yourself if someone seems to be criticizing you? Write up the way in which you acted and thought, or discuss it in class or with others.

7. *Mistaken meanings for ethical terms.*

It was said earlier that ethical terms, such as "bad," could mean many different things. We must, then, find out which meaning it has. But often the meanings given are irrational or unreasonable. To see this, look at the following few examples. "Your behavior is bad," may mean:

a) That you do not act as I do.

But this is not an acceptable reason. People from other countries do not act as we do either. What we need to know is what the consequences of our actions are, and whether they help or harm anyone.

It is an error to think that just because others do not act as we do that they are bad or wrong.

b) That your behavior is unfamiliar to me.

Again, because one's behavior is strange to you does not mean it is bad or harmful to anyone. People say, "I have always been told that is

He does not think like I do. But it still doesn't mean he is wrong or weird or crazy.

wrong." *Just because we have been taught all our lives that something is wrong, does not mean that it is wrong. We need to know the specific reasons.*

If we do not ask for reasons why one says something is good, it can lead to prejudice. *Prejudice is believing strongly without basis or without examining the evidence.*

c) That some authority says so.

This is an unacceptable reason also. Merely because someone says that you are bad or wrong does not make it so. Authorities often disagree. We still need to know what harm, if any, your behavior does. Nothing substitutes for knowing the reasons and arguments yourself.

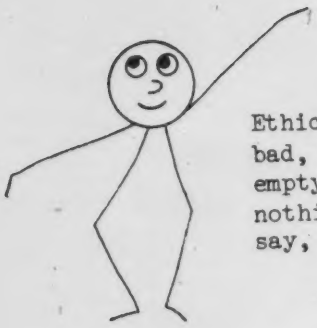
d) ("Your behavior is bad," may mean many other fallacious things. They need to be examined.)

Exercises

a) Discuss the use of ethical terms in advertising.

b) Question each other about your beliefs about what is good and bad, and see if they really are.

c) Try to find some prejudices you might have. Discuss them. (e.g., prejudice against younger or older people, fat or skinny people, people who are not as smart or good looking as you are, people who have different kinds of hobbies than you do, or like different kinds of music.



Ethical words, such as bad, wrong, and good, are empty words. They say nothing. One could even say, "Good is bad."

Ethics is based on intelligence and inquiry.
Ethics is scientific.

The above mistakes come about mainly because the meanings often given to ethical terms do not make sense. Also it's no good to define ethical terms in terms of other ethical terms, for example, "It's *wrong* because it's *bad*." Here we don't know what either term means. "It's *wrong* to sing in class because it is *bad*," doesn't say anything.

We may say that a friend is *good* because he behaves *well*. But "good" and "well" mean the same thing. So we do not know much more than we did at the start. Using an ethical term to give the meaning of an ethical term in this way is called repetition or "circular" thinking.

Then, in order to understand what an ethical word means we must use some non-ethical term. For example, in "It's bad to throw stones," we may mean that if one throws stones at people, they can get hurt, and I do not *want* or *like* people to get hurt. "Bad" here finally means one doesn't *want* or *like* something. *Bad reduces to wants and likes.* Lying is wrong, not because it is "bad" or "immoral," but because one doesn't like it or want it in terms of its consequences. These wants or likes are descriptive. Ethics reduces to descriptive terms. Ethics is scientific. There is no mystical

Ethical, value, and moral terms, are just vague terms. To make sense of them we must reduce them to wants, knowledge, and consequences.

separate "realm of morality," or "realm of ethics." The only realm of ethics or morality is a realm of vague terms. A diagram may help to show this:

Ethical terms (good, bad, right, wrong, ought, ought not, better than, worse than)

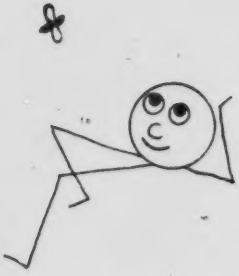
mean (or)
reduce to

Descriptive experiences (beliefs, wants, likes, knowledge, goals)

Why is killing wrong? Some say killing is right, for example, in wartime. Others say it is right only in the case of self-defense. Look at the following series of reasons. It shows that one open-context ethical term leads to another. It is like saying killing is bad, because it is bad, because it is bad.

a) "Killing is *bad* because you do not have a *right* to take another person's life."

This only says, "Killing is bad because it's not right," and so is circular. *Bad* and *right* are both open-context ethical terms. In the sense that anyone can kill anyone else, he has the right to do so. The law states not that you should not kill, but that if you do there are certain very severe penalties.



I'm just going to take a nap while you read this page. Be sure to shoo the flies away. One once landed in my mouth.

Some people have strong arguments that killing is never justifiable. The penalty for killing may even be, being killed.

b) "Killing is *bad* because one *should* not kill." "Bad" and "should" are both open-context ethical terms. This is circular.

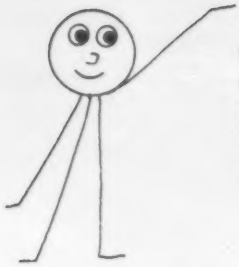
c) "Killing is bad because I do not *want* to kill or to be killed."

This ends the repetition of ethical terms. "Bad" reduces to a want, and wants are descriptive, not ethical.

Although it sounds very strange, killing is bad because we do not like or want it. It is not wrong in itself. If we do not want or like it, it is often because of our dislike of pain and physical harm to others, and our belief that it would result in a suicidal society, and so on. Killing is not wrong in itself, but there are excellent arguments which may be made to support the belief that killing never leads to adequately desirable consequences.

If we think carefully, we will find that ethical words will finally mean wants, likes, beliefs, and what we know of what happens if we do certain things.

Nothing is right or wrong in itself. We would not know what that would mean. Things are right or wrong because of what happens and what we

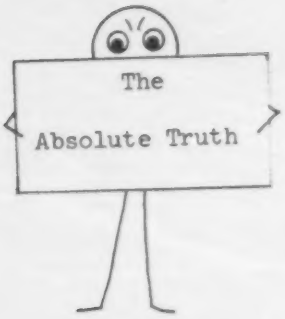


One could argue that the only reason one would do harmful things is because he is ignorant. He does not know enough.

want to happen. It is wrong for me to steal from you, because I do not *want* you or anyone else to steal from me. Also, I *want* you to be happy, and stealing from you would probably make you unhappy. Thus, it is wrong to steal because of what I want and what you want.

The more I know about what happens to myself and others when I steal or do things, the better I will be able to make things work out. If I don't know that by stealing I may hurt myself and others, I may find that out the hard way and so get hurt. It is usually not intelligent to steal. A person steals when he does not understand what happens when he steals. Thus, to be ethical is to understand, to be intelligent. It is to know the results of our actions. To be ethical is also to understand our own wants and goals. The more we know about ourselves, the more ethical we can be. The philosopher, Socrates, once said that people only do bad things out of ignorance.

Thus, the most ethical person is the one who is intelligent, knows himself and knows what happens because of his actions. To be ethical is merely to bring about your needs and wants effectively. One of our needs usually is to be also concerned for the happiness of others. To be ethical is to have intelligent beliefs and goals and to act on them. To be ethical is to constantly inquire.



Dogma, or fixed belief, is unintelligent and irrational. Thus, it can cause harm to ourselves and others. Dogma is, in this sense, unethical.

On this view, any belief which is dogmatic and does not examine cause and effect, consequences, and knowledge of the situation—is unethical. Dogma and prejudice are unethical.

How to Solve Ethical Questions

One way to resolve ethical or moral questions is to have clear and intelligent wants, know what they are, bring them in line with your understanding of consequences, and to know how to intelligently adjust and satisfy such wants and likes. Ethics rests on inquiry.

Ethical problems are often caused by two or more beliefs or desires which cannot be held at the same time. For example, you would like to stay up until one o'clock in the morning, but your parents want you to be in bed much earlier. One way to resolve such problems is to find out what is wrong with staying up late, and what the reasons are for going to bed early. The more facts you have, the easier you will be able to make a decision. Ethics compares some of your wants with other of your wants.

The meaning of "bad" and other ethical words is basically determined by the following things:

a) What we like.

b) What we want.

The more we know,
the more clearly we think,
the more ethical we can be.

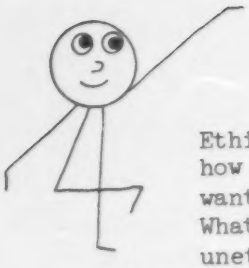
c) What we know.
d) Our knowledge of how ethical terms work.
e) Understanding ourselves and others.
f) Understanding how emotions work.

The clearer we are about each of these things the more we can bring about our likes and wants, consistently and adequately, and so the more ethical we can be.

Ethical terms such as "bad," then, reduce to our likes and our knowledge. "It is *bad* to swear," often means "I *don't like* it if you swear." It may mean, "If you swear, it will hurt other persons' feelings." This requires that you have *knowledge* of the effect of swearing on others. Ethical problems often involve gaining knowledge of how to bring about your wants and likes without hurting anyone. One test of whether or not we should do something which might be bad, is to ask ourselves, "What would it be like if everyone did this?"

Ethics also rests on our wants and likes and finding ways of bringing them about without contradiction to our other wants and likes.

We often think our likes cannot be changed. We may think we dislike someone and that nothing can be done about it. This is not true. By greater discussion and understanding we can learn



Ethics is knowing
how to bring about our
wants in a rational way.
Whatever prevents that is
unethical.

to like things which help ourselves and others, and learn to dislike harmful things such as smoking. Learning to like spinach makes sense, smoking doesn't. To be ethical, one has to constantly inquire, question his behavior and bring his wants and likes in line with his knowledge and consequences in an adequate manner. People often find that they now like things which they once disliked.

Although nothing is absolutely right or wrong there is an exception to this. Whenever a person says something is bad, he says it in terms of his beliefs, knowledge and desires at that time. It is absolute or certain for him at the time he says it. Another way of saying this is that ethics begins with what we now believe, know, and desire. It starts with where we are.

We saw earlier that if we don't know how ethical language works we can make many mistakes which can be harmful. Ethical problems arise in other ways also. Ethical problems arise because of a confusion or conflict of wants, beliefs or knowledge. You may do bad or wrong things because:

1) You do not know the consequences of your actions.
2) You are confused about your wants or goals.
3) You have conflicts between several desires or goals.
4) You do not understand the situation.
5) You do not understand how to deal with the situation.
6) You lose control of your emotions and become angry, moody, or you hurt people.

The following is unethical because it is contradictory:

"A gentleman's agreement is an arrangement which is not an agreement, between two persons neither of whom is a gentleman, with each expecting the other to be strictly bound while he himself has no intention of being bound at all." (Justice Vaisey)

7) You believe in things which are false, or for which there is no evidence.

8) Your beliefs are unrealistic or not practical.

9. Your actions are conflicting with your statements and understanding. (You say you desire or will do one thing, but actually do another.)

10) One belief may conflict with another belief.

11) You may not know how to change your bad habits.

12) You lie to yourself or others so that you can get your way.

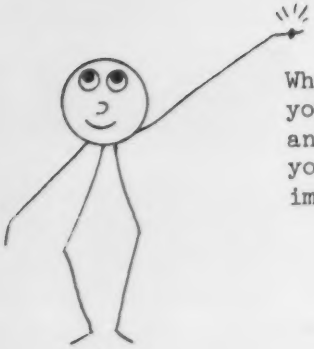
13) You look only at your side of the situation without understanding the full situation. You don't try to find out more about a situation before you act.

14) You purposely hurt others. You wish to see others suffer because of your own unresolved problems. (Someone may have hurt you, and you try to get revenge by hurting others.)

15) You cannot say what the problem is or clearly discuss it. (Discussion is the first thing needed in solving ethical problems.)

16) You have prejudices, or blindly follow some authority.

Thus, ethical problems arise mainly because of ignorance. An unethical person is an ignorant person. In order to be ethical we need to constantly inquire, improve our knowledge, and constantly question our thoughts and behavior. We are not born ethical. It is something that takes constant thought and inquiry.



What would you do if
you had a magic ring
and you could do anything
you wished? Would you do
immoral things?

Some Ethical Problems for Discussion

Use the above methods of clarifying terms, wants, finding methods of achieving wants, and gaining new knowledge of cause-effect and consequences, to attempt to resolve the following:

1) Should you drink alcohol?

2) Should you smoke marijuana? or cigarettes?

3) Is capital punishment justifiable?

4) Is it wrong to be buried in an old Ford rather than in a casket?

5) Is it always wrong to lie?

6) Is it always wrong to steal?

7) What are the best and most adequate goals for you? (e.g., inquiry, marriage, own a powerful, expensive car, obtain a college education, etc.)

8) Is it wrong to swear?

9) Is it wrong to be lazy?

10) Is it wrong to be uncritical and not try to improve your knowledge and ability to think?

11) Is it wrong to try to have your way by using anger?

12) Is it wrong to really believe in things for which you have insufficient evidence?

13) Is it wrong to miss classes?

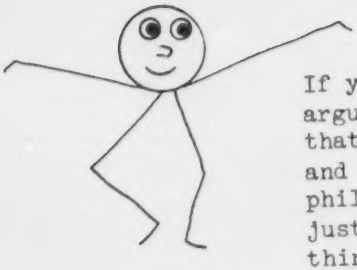
14) Is it wrong not to pay attention in class?

15) Is it wrong to tell people you did something which you did not do, just to make yourself look good?

16) Is it wrong to cheat on exams?

17) Is it wrong to wear only a bathing suit to school?

18) Are the words of popular (e.g., rock) music immoral? Do they have a bad influence?



If you follow any of these arguments about time it shows that you can be critical and can even do critical philosophy. Philosophy is just careful, critical thinking and clarification of ideas.

19) Is it wrong to complain about your teachers or fellow students, rather than try to communicate with them or understand and help them?

20) Is it wrong to blame or criticize people?

21) Is it ever right to blame people?

22) If people usually do bad things out of ignorance, should they have a duty to inquire?

23) Should school children only be taught one right way of behaving, with all other knowledge being censored?

24) Is it wrong to shoot into bushes or the forest?

25) Are you "spoiled" in any way? ("Spoiled" is a value term.)

26) Do you take generosity for granted? If so, whose?

27) What are the best goals you can have?

Present conflicts which you have had and discuss how to resolve them. Present your own ethical questions for discussion.

Wittgenstein said that
a whole and good book
on critical philosophy
could be written which
consists of nothing but
jokes. (You may have
to read the book first in
order to understand some of
them. Some people don't care
if they don't understand the
book but really care if they
can't understand the jokes.)

Jokes About Ethical or Value Terms

Ambiguous Humor (Puns) (Double meaning)

Remember: Zonk soap is *best*. It's better than sand.

The only *good* time we had at the party was on our watches.

"There is a fly in my soup." Waiter: "It *should* be put behind bars."

Look out for anyone who says he will do *good* things for you. You don't know what he will do.

I always keep my promises. No one else wants them.

What is the difference between *good* and heavy? None, good is heavy.

Can a *right* triangle be wrong?

Are you *good* if you come *right* home?

Are you *bad right* now?

Is it *bad* to steal with your *right* hand?

Category Mistake Humor (Use of a Word in the Wrong Context)

"I *like* vanilla ice cream."
"*Wrong,* you like cherry."

"I *like* peas."
"You're *wrong.*"

I like comics. Am I mistaken?

Circular Humor

It is *wrong* because it's *wrong*, that's all.

It is *wrong* because it is *immoral.*

It's just *wrong*. It is. It's *wrong.*

Of course I'm *right. Right* is *right* isn't it?

You may think you are *right*, but you are *wrong, wrong,* as *wrong* can be. If you only knew how *wrong* you are.

It is *wrong* to (do anything) *too much.*

I *like good* things.

Anger is *wrong* because it is not the *right* way to deal with problems.

All of his acts are *good* because they are *ethical, moral, right,* and *responsible.*

Sick humor is *terrible.*

He is *innocent* for the simple reason that he is not *guilty.*

Is it *bad* to *blab*?

It's *wrong* because it is *immoral.*

"You *ought* to do your *duty.*" "Are you sure?" ("Duty" means "you ought to.")

Contradiction Humor

I once thought I was *wrong* but I was mistaken.

You *should not* say, "I am sleeping," even if someone asks.

Of course I'm *good.* I gave up stealing lots of times.

It is *wrong* to pull out the same tooth twice.

It is your *duty* not to grow any taller.

It is your *obligation* not to be bigger than yourself.

Please *do not* draw round squares.

So, you are the small child *guilty* of growing older.

He is *guilty* of being good.

"You've no *right* to grow here," said the Dormouse. (*Alice in Wonderland*)

Everyone *should* be honest liars.

He is too *superior* to be *superior.*

Yes, I am *good.* Do you want to fight about it?

You are *responsible* for everything that happens in the world.

Mistakes are *good.*

Everyone is equal, but some more than others.

It is *good* to be *naughty.*

Absolute freedom.

It's *good* to be *fat* and *sloppy.*

Bad things are nice, but good ones I just can't stand.

Weeds are *nice.*

I always know what is right, but I never do it.

I *like creeps.*

Twerps are *OK* in my book.

It is *good* to *hog* things.

It is *good* to *gobble* and *gulp* food.

Don't move your face when you smile.

You *ought* to talk without making a sound.

Behave yourself and play your music silently.

He is a *good fool.*

I love *greed* and *pests.*

You *ought* to have a female uncle.

We have a *right* to keep it. We stole it *fair* and square.

That is an *excellent mess.*

You *ought* to remember the future.

It is the *best mistake* I have seen yet.

He sang the "Feeling *Good*" *blues.*

He *apologizes* only for things he *can't help.*

"Is he a *good* cook?"
"Sure, if you like eggs fried in the shell."

I'm *good* most of the time—such as at three o'clock in the morning.

He is not *bad*. He never hurt anyone except out of *greed* and *selfishness*. And he was never dishonest when he told the truth. That much must be said *for* him.

This statement is *wrong.*

"That is a *good* restaurant."
"Sure, if you *don't mind* what you eat."

Of course, I'm *good*. I helped clean off the mud I threw at him, didn't I?

Don't walk on the water.

"You are found to be *not guilty* of theft."
"Then, can I keep the money?"

I'm very *good*. I can resist everything but temptation.

Deviation from Desires, Humor

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "Does it taste *better*, then?"

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter tasting the soup: "Mmmm, *not bad* at all."

Deviation from Ideal, Humor

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "It's the *best* we could do, sir."

Deviation from Practical, Humor

"It's the *best* bicycle you can buy."
"But don't you have one with two wheels?"

"They would make very *good* house pets."
"What would?"
"Lemon elephants."

Take some rocks to bed with you.

It is your *duty* to give all of the money you earn back to your boss at the end of each week.

Count the number of hairs on your head.

He was always told to *do* to others what he would want them to do to him. So he kissed the new girl.

Defeated Expectation Humor
(We are led to expect one thing but surprised at an unexpected conclusion.)

This bicycle is really *good*. In fact, I can truthfully say that it is *better* than—nothing.

He is an amazing person when you think of what he can do. I would even have to say that he is *superior* to—a duck.

Men are *superior*. We just have not yet figured out what they are *superior* to.

False Assumption Humor

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "The soup is *good*, too."

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "You're *wrong*, that's not soup."

He is a *good* rock musician so he must be a *good* person.

False Following of Authority, Humor

But there is no law saying that it is *wrong* to pour ginger ale in your shoe.

False *Blame* Humor

Sure I tied him up, but my hands must have done it when I wasn't looking.

"Who stole the money?"
"Wasn't there a strange cat in the neighborhood?"

Blame your dog for everything that goes wrong.

Sure I ate the cookies, but the cookies are as much to *blame* as I am.

False Argument from Force, Humor

Of course, I'm *right*. I'm bigger than you, aren't I?

False Reason Humor

"Why did you do that?"
"Because I'm *bad*."

It seemed *wrong* to stick out my tongue at him, but I was really hungry.

They had me feeling so young I wasn't old enough to know any *better*.

False Argument from Tradition, Humor

It stood the test of time. Thousands of people like it. That is why chewing tobacco is so *good*.

If it is traditional, it must be *good*—like fighting and scrapping.

Hypocrisy Humor
(Pretending to say or do one thing, but say or do another, especially the opposite.)

We claim to want to bring about the greatest *good* for the greatest number of people, yet we buy toys while people starve.

Who, me *bad*? Sweet, little, innocent looking me?

Sure, it's a good car. Just look at that shine.

I wouldn't do anything bad. I might get caught.

Tell someone something is *wrong in itself* for them to do, because *you* don't want them to do it.

Pretend something is *wrong in itself* so you can control someone's behavior.

Impossibility Humor

It's *wrong* to ride a bicycle up walls.

People *should not* breathe air.

You *should not* walk to the moon.

To punish kitten, she (Alice) held it up to the Looking-Glass that it might see how sulky it was "—and if you're not *good* directly," she added, "I'll put you through into Looking-Glass House."

(Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass)*

It's your *duty* to fly backwards.

Teach a bird to fly in water.

Teach a bee to fly backwards.

Read the dictionary in ten minutes.

Irony Humor
(Say the opposite of what you mean)

The *best goal* of life is laziness.

He is not really *bad*, if you watch him all the time.

All right, children, I'm leaving now. While I'm gone I want you to raid the refrigerator, shout, fight, talk back, throw things, and stay up late.

He is a *good* liar, a *good* thief, and terrific at getting things away from others.

It's a *good* collection if you like five thousand different types of weeds.

Fred was really *good* today, but I don't know how he can sleep so long.

My philosophy is just to take on the *values* of those around us, no matter how *absurd.*

Blatant Lie Humor (Obvious lie)

If you don't behave, I'll send you to China.

If you don't behave, fourteen snakes will bite you.

Taking Statements Literally, Humor

You *ought not* to steal time, or beat time, either.

Metaphor Humor (Relate two unlike things)

Yes, I did wink at her. I must have lost control at the wheel.

I like the color and smell of good.

Misuse Humor

I don't like this and neither do you.

Everybody should smoke cigars whether they like them or not.

Everyone *should* be *equal*. (But there is no such thing as equality in itself.)

It's *wrong* because I said so.

"I like that." "False."

It's *wrong* because it just is.

What would "the absolutely *right* road" mean?

That's what absolute *good* or *right* is like. (Wittgenstein)

It's *wrong*. I just know it, that's all.

To ask for *the* meaning of good is like asking for *the* meaning of a hammer.

Miss the Point, Humor

"There's a fly in my soup."

"Don't worry, soup is *good* for flies."

Nonsense Humor

Saturday is *virtuous*.

Don't talk to trees.

It's your *duty* to smell Tuesdays, teach turtles to fly, and listen to the sounds circles make.

Good weights 40 pounds and is warm on Tuesdays.

Bicycles are *moral.*

"Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise." (*Alice in Wonderland*)

Paradox Humor

If yellow means a color which you see, what does "good" mean?

If you do no harm, you are *guilty.*

Personification Humor
(Give animals and things human qualities)

Immoral duck.

Naughty frog.

Ethics is *Good* fighting with *Bad.*

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "Serves it right." (Also pun on "serves.")

Should rabbits be punished?

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "Flies do know *good* soup when they see it."

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "I'm sorry, it must have been a *bad* fly."

Reversal Humor
(Reverse the sentence or situation):

All parents should obey their children.

Riddle Humor

Do ants know the difference between right and wrong?

Reduction to Absurdity Humor
(Show that the result of a belief does not make sense)

It's *wrong* because my father said so, and my grandfather also said it is *wrong*, and the milkman of my great grandfather's friend said it is *wrong*.

You can always ask, "Is it good?" Is this statement good?

I have a built-in duty to eat ice cream sodas.

It's *wrong* because it's bad. It's *bad* because we shouldn't do it, and we *shouldn't* do it because it is the *worse* thing to do, and it is the *worse* thing to do because someone said, "*Don't* do it." That's why.

Obey everyone no matter who it is or what he tells you to do.

Bring about the greatest *good* for the greatest number of people by giving each of your friends a jelly bean.

Suppose you have one pie. To bring about the greatest *good* for the greatest number of people, you can either give one pie to one person, or give thousands of people a tiny crumb.

Self-Criticism Humor

I'm a *terrible* person, the *worst* person I can think of. I'm *no good* at all. I'm just a crumb.

Whenever people agree with me, I assume I must be *wrong*.

Sinking Humor
(Relate the important or valuable with the unimportant or trivial)

Good means Mmmmm.

Eating cookies is immoral.

I must be a very good person. I gave you half a stick of gum, didn't I?

The greatest goal for our country, now, is to produce more—bubble gum.

Deviation from Value, Humor (Don't try it)

He is a *good* lazy person.

There is nothing *better than* a smashed, bloody nose.

It's not enough to be a happy pig. (Mill)

Blatant Vice
(Showing how *bad* you can be)

Come here, and I'll tell you what is really *right* and *wrong*.

My *goal* in life is to cheat, steal, and be as mean as possible.

Dogma and prejudice are the only truths.

It's your *duty* to do whatever I tell you.

I'm nice.

Grab a fistful of pie and stuff it into your mouth.

Trick Humor

Tell people you will do something good for them, but don't tell them what you mean by "*good*".